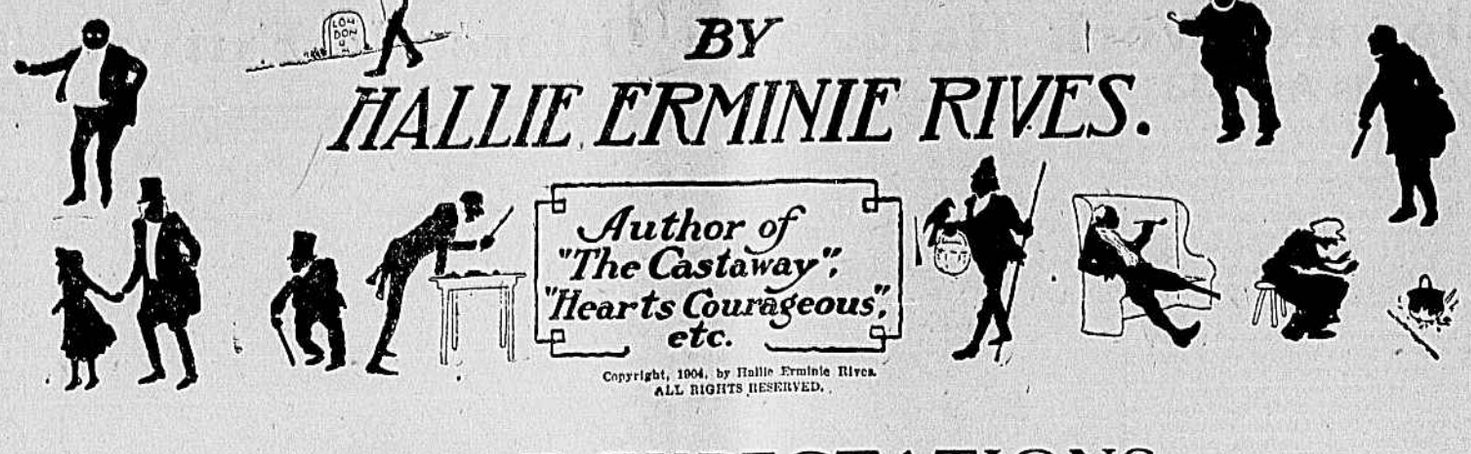
Tales from Dickens.

BY HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES.

Charles Dickens



Hallie Erminie Rives

GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

1.—Pip and the Convict.

IN ENGLAND, in a lonely village not far from London, lived a little orphan boy named Philip Pirrip, whom everybody called, for short, "Pip." His parents had died when he was a baby, and he had been brought up by his older sister, the wife of Joe Gregory, a blacksmith, whose forge looked out across wide marshes and a river that flowed through them.

Joe, the blacksmith, was a fair-faced man with flaxen whiskers and very bright blue eyes. He was mild, honest, good-natured, sweet-tempered, easy-going, foolish, dear fellow, tender hearted and kind to little Pip and yet a Hercules for strength. Very different, indeed, was "Mrs. Joe," as everybody spoke of her; she was tall and bony and had black hair, a red skin and a continual habit of scolding. She may have loved Pip in her way, but that way was a very cross-grained one. She treated Joe, the big blacksmith, and Pip, the little boy, just alike, and they were both equally in dread of her. This made them quite like partners. Whenever Pip came into the house he used to look at Joe's fingers; if Joe crossed them that was a sign Mrs. Joe was cross and that Pip was to look out for himself.

Joe had an uncle named Pumblechook, a corn seller in the next town and a pompous old hypocrite. He had a way of standing Pip before him, rumpling up his hair and asking him hard questions out of the multiplication table, and whenever he spoke of any one who was ungrateful or wicked he would glower at Pip in a way that made him feel very uncomfortable. Another who came as often and was almost as dismal to see was Wopsle, the clerk, who read the lesson in church every Sunday. He had an idea he would make a great actor and used to recite whole pages from Shakespeare, when he could find any one to listen to him.

Worst of all was a workman of Joe's named Orlick. He was a loose-limbed, swarthy, slouching giant with a hang-dog look. He used to tell Pip that the devil lived in a certain corner of the forge, and once in every seven years the fire had to be rekindled with a live boy. Orlick at heart disliked everybody—especially harmless little Pip—and often quarreled with Mrs. Joe.

Besides the blacksmith, the only one who understood Pip was a little girl, named Biddy, about his own age and an orphan, too. She liked him and used to help him with his lessons at school.

But in spite of Joe and Biddy, Pip was sometimes so lonely and miserable that he would steal off alone to the village churchyard, where his father and mother lay buried, to cry.

One afternoon—it was the day before Christmas—Pip was more wretched than usual, and was sitting crying among the graves, when suddenly a rough voice spoke behind him. "Keep still, you little imp!" it said, "or I'll cut your throat!" With the words a man rose up from behind a tombstone and seized him.

He was a fearful-looking man, dressed all in gray clothes, with a great iron band riveted onto his leg. His shoes were torn, he had no hat and wore a ragged, dirty handkerchief tied around his head. He was spattered with water, caked with mud and limped and shivered as he walked. He set Pip on a tombstone and tilted him so far back that the church steeple seemed to turn a somersault, growling at him in a terrible voice.

Pip had never been so frightened in his life. With a trembling voice he begged his captor to spare him. The man asked him his name and where he lived, and told him he would let him go on one condition. He had to promise to come next morning at daylight to a certain spot in the marshes and to bring a file and something to eat. And he said if Pip did not do so, or if he told any one what he was going to do, he would catch him again and cut out his heart and eat it.

This terrible threat frightened poor little Pip more than ever. His voice shook so that he could hardly promise, and when the man set him down he ran home as fast as his legs would carry him.

The evening was a miserable one. Pip thought he would save his own supper for the man in case he should not be able to get into his sister's pantry, so instead of eating his bread and butter he slipped it down his trouser leg.

Before long a great gun began to boom, and he asked Joe what it was. The blacksmith told him that in the river across the marshes were anchored some big hulks of ships, like wicked Noah's arks, where convicts were kept prisoners, and that the gun was a signal that some of these convicts had escaped. Then Pip knew the man he had promised to help was a criminal—perhaps a murderer—who had got away and was hiding from the soldiers. All night he did not sleep. He hated to steal the food, but he felt certain he would be killed if he did not.

So at the dawn he slipped down stairs, got a file from the forge, unlocked the pantry, took some bread and cheese and a pork pie that Uncle Pumblechook had sent for Christmas dinner, and ran out through the foggy morning to the marshes.

He had not got quite there when he came on a man in gray, sitting on the ground, with an iron on his leg. Pip thought he was the one he was in search of, but as soon as the other turned his face he saw by a bruise on the cheek that he was not. This second man in gray, as soon as he saw him, sprang to his feet and ran away.

Greatly wondering, Pip went on, and at the right spot he found the man who had frightened him in the graveyard. He seemed to be almost starved, for he snatched the food and ate it like a hungry dog. He asked Pip if he had seen any one else on his way there, and Pip told him of the other man in gray who also wore an iron on his leg.

He asked Pip to describe him, but when Pip told of the bruised cheek the man he was feeding flew into a rage. He began to curse, and, seizing the file, set to filing like mad at his fetter. Pip could see that he hated the other convict, and was sorry he had escaped, but he had fulfilled his promise now, so he turned and ran home again, and the last thing he heard was the rasp of the file as the man worked madly at the fetter on his leg.

Very guilty Pip felt all that Christmas morning. He went to church with Joe, and after service Uncle Pumblechook and Wopsle, the clerk, and other company came for dinner. He could not enjoy the good things to eat, for he knew that now his sister must discover that the pork-pie was gone. Just as she went to get it he got up to run away, but as he opened the door he ran plump into a file of soldiers.

He was sure they had come to arrest him for helping the convict, but he was soon relieved, as the officer at their head explained that they were on their way to search the marshes for the escaped men and wanted the blacksmith to mend a broken handcuff. In their arrival the pork-pie was forgotten, while Joe mended the handcuff in the forge. When the soldiers left, the blacksmith set Pip on his broad shoulder, and he and Wopsle went striding with them to see the result of the hunt.

It was sunset as the party entered the marshes, and the searches opened out into a wide line. On a sudden all stopped, for a confused shouting had come from the distance. They ran toward it cocking their guns, and Wopsle and Joe with Pip on his shoulder, followed. The shouts became plainer and plainer, and all at once they came to a ditch at the bottom of which the convict, Pip, had fed and the one with the bruised cheek were struggling fiercely together.

The soldiers seized and handcuffed them both, the man with the bruised cheek pale and trembling, the other boasting that he had dragged the man he hated back to captivity, even though it cost him his own freedom.

While the soldiers were preparing to take their prisoners back, the convict, Pip had aided, saw him standing with Joe. Pip hoped he would not think he had had anything to do with bringing the soldiers. He was pretty sure he did not, because he presently told the officer in every one's hearing that the night before he had broken into a house where a blacksmith lived near a church and stolen a pork pie. Joe himself heard this and so Pip knew he himself would be clear of any blame.

The convicts were taken back to their cells and Joe and Pip went home to tell the company of their adventure. But neither then nor ever afterward did Pip find courage to tell Joe the part he had played; for Pip loved the honest blacksmith and did not want him to think him worse than he really was.

Time went on and Pip grew older and bigger, and though he never forgot the adventure of the churchyard, yet the memory grew dimmer. In the next few years only one thing happened to recall it to him.

One evening Mrs. Joe sent Pip to the village inn, "The Three Jolly Bargemen," with a message. Pip found Joe there, sitting with a stranger—a secret-looking man, who held his head on one side and kept one eye perpetually shut up as if he were taking aim with a gun. This man, when he heard Pip's name, looked at him with a curious wink, and when no one but Pip was looking he took out of his pocket, to stir his drink with, the very file Pip had stolen from Joe's forge. Pip knew that moment that the man was a friend of the convict he had befriended. When Pip left the inn the stranger called him back and gave him a shilling wrapped up in a piece of paper.

When he got home Mrs. Joe (who took the prize away from him) discovered that the piece of paper was really two bank notes, and both Joe and she wondered at it. The blacksmith tried next day to find the stranger to restore the money, but he had left the inn, and so it always remained a mystery—to all but Pip, of course, who knew in his heart the convict had remembered his aid and took this means of repaying him.

2.—The Strange Miss Havisham.

ONE day, when Pip was considerably older, Uncle Pumblechook brought Mrs. Joe word that a Miss Havisham, a lady who lived in his town, had heard of Pip, and wanted him to come to her house to see her. Miss Havisham was a very queer lady, indeed; so queer that some said she was crazy, but she was rich, and for this reason Mrs. Joe scrubbed Pip and dressed him in his best clothes and sent him off in care of Uncle Pumblechook, who took him as far as Miss Havisham's gate.

Miss Havisham, when she was a beautiful young lady, had been engaged to marry a man named Compeyson, whom she loved exceedingly. He was a wicked, heartless villain, however, and had made her love him only that he might persuade her to give him great sums of money. The marriage day finally was fixed, her wedding clothes were bought, the house was decorated for the ceremony, the bride-cake was put on the table in the dining room and the guests arrived. But Compeyson, the bridegroom, did not come. Miss Havisham was dressing for the wedding when she received a cruel note from him telling her he did not intend to marry her. She had put on her white wedding gown and her lace veil and one of her satin slippers—the other lay on the dressing table. It was exactly twenty minutes to 9 o'clock when she read the note.

She fainted and afterward lay for a long time sick. When she recovered she laid the whole place waste. She never thereafter let the light of day into the old mansion. The shutters were closed, candles were kept always lighted, and all the clocks in the house were stopped at exactly twenty minutes to 9 o'clock. Not a thing in any room was changed. The bride-cake rotted on the table, the decorations faded on the walls, and day after day Miss Havisham sat in the dressing room dressed in her wedding gown and veil, with one slipper on, the dead flowers on her table and the trunks for her wedding journey scattered about half packed. In time she became shrunken and old and the white satin and lace became faded yellow, but she never varied this habit of life.

Soon after her love disappointment she had written to her lawyer in London, who was named Jaggers, asking him to find a baby girl for her to adopt as her own. Now Mr Jaggers had just defended in court a man named Abel Magwitch, the tool of Compeyson, who had broken Miss Havisham's heart. Compeyson had tempted Magwitch into passing some stolen money and they had both been arrested. At the trial Compeyson (sneak and liar as he was!) threw all the blame on his comrade, who was duller and less sharp than he, and as a consequence, while Compeyson got a light sentence, Magwitch, though really the more innocent of the two, had been sent to the prison ship for a term of many years. Those two men, by the way, were the convicts who escaped from the hulks into the marshes, and Magwitch was the one to whom Pip brought the food.

This Magwitch, as it happened, had a baby daughter, which had fallen into Mr. Jagger's care, and in answer to Miss Havisham's request the lawyer had sent the little girl to her, telling her nothing of the child's parentage.

Miss Havisham had named her Estella, and seeing she would be a very beautiful woman, had determined to bring her up heartless and cold, to ruin as many men's lives as possible, so as to avenge her own wrongs and broken heart.

There on a bench, a sad, beautiful widow, sat Estella.

So Estella had grown up in the dismal house. Miss Havisham's only companion. Day by day she became more lovely, and even while she was still a little girl, the same age as Pip, Miss Havisham was impatient to teach her her lesson.

This was the reason Pip received his invitation: though he had no idea of it, he was intended only as practice for little Estella, who, under Miss Havisham's teaching was growing up very fond of admiration and very cold-hearted, too.

Pip thought Miss Havisham the strangest lady he had ever seen, and the yellow satin, the candle-lighted rooms, and the stopped clocks seemed to him very odd. But Estella was so pretty that from the first moment he saw her he had little eye for anything else. Even though she called him clumsy and common, and seemed to delight in hurting his feelings, yet Pip fell in love with her and could not help himself. Miss Havisham made them play together and told him to come again the next week.

Pip went home in very bad humor on account of all the hurts which Estella had given to his feelings. Uncle Pumblechook, being very curious to know all about his trip, bullied and questioned him so (beginning as usual with the multiplication table) that Pip, perfectly frantic, told him the most impossible tales; he said Miss Havisham was in a black coach inside the house, and had cake and wine handed to her through the coach window on a golden plate, and that he and she played with flags and swords, while four dogs fought for veal cutlets out of a silver basket. But when Uncle Pumblechook told Joe these wonders, Pip was remorseful. He went to the forge and confessed to Joe that he had been telling a falsehood, and promised he would never do so again.

This visit was the first of many that Pip paid to the gloomy house whose shutters were always closed. Next time he went he was taken into the chamber where the decayed wedding cake sat on the table. The room was full of relatives of Miss Havisham (for it was her birthday), who spent their lives flattering and cringing, hoping when she died she would leave them some money. After a time Pip went into the garden and there he met another relative in the person of a pale young gentleman about his own age, but larger, who promptly lowered his head, butted Pip in the stomach and invited him to fight. Pip was so sure nobody else's head belonged in the pit of his stomach that he obliged him at once, and as practice at the forge had made him tough, it was not many minutes before the pale young gentleman was lying on his back, looking up at him out of an exceedingly black eye and with a bleeding countenance.

When Estella let Pip out of the gate that day he guessed that she had seen the encounter and that somehow it had pleased her, for she gave him her cheek to kiss. Yet he knew that at heart she thought him only a coarse, common boy, fit to be treated rudely and insolently. This thought rankled more and more in him. He made us his mind to study and learn, and he got faithful little Biddy to teach him all she knew.

Pip saw no more of the pale young gentleman, though for almost a year he went to Miss Havisham's every other day. Each time he saw Estella and felt himself loving her more and more. But she was always unkind, and often, when she had been ruder than usual, he saw that Miss Havisham seemed to take delight in his mortification. Sometimes she would fondle Estella's hand, and he would hear her say:

"That's right! Break their hearts, my pride and hope! Break their hearts and have no mercy!"

At last one day Miss Havisham sent for Joe, the blacksmith, and gave him a bag of money, telling him that he was not to send Pip to her any more, but that he should put him to work and teach him the trade of blacksmithing. So Uncle Pumblechook took Pip to town that very day and had him bound to Joe as an apprentice.

This was just what Pip had once looked forward to with pleasure. But now it made him wretched. Through Estella's jeers he had come to feel that blacksmithing was common and low. He thought constantly, as he helped Joe blowing the forge fire, of Estella's looks of disdain, yet in spite of all he longed to see her.

On his first half-holiday he went to call on Miss Havisham. But there was no Estella. Miss Havisham told him she had sent her abroad to be educated as a lady, and when the miserable tears sprang to Pip's eyes, she laughed. When he got home he confided in Biddy. He told her how he loved Estella, and that he wanted more than anything else in the world to be a gentleman. Meanwhile he began to study hard at any spare time he had, and Biddy helped him all she could.

Pip might have fallen in love with Biddy if he had not had Estella always in his mind. Orlick, Joe's helper, indeed, thought he had done so, and it made him hate Pip more than ever, for he was in love with Biddy himself. He grew morose and quarrelsome and spoke so roughly to Mrs. Joe one day that she was not satisfied till the blacksmith took off his singed apron and knocked the surly Orlick down in the coal dust.

This was a costly revenge for Mrs. Joe, however. Orlick never forgave it, and a few nights after, when no one was at home but herself, he crept in behind her in the kitchen and struck her a terrible blow on the head with a piece of iron. Hours afterward Joe found Mrs. Joe lying senseless, and though she lived to recover a part of her senses, she never scolded or spoke again. She grew well enough at last to sit all day in her chair, but was so helpless that Biddy came to the house to be her nurse. It chanced that a prisoner had escaped from the prison boats on the night Mrs. Joe was injured, and he was thought to be the one who attacked her. But Pip suspected Orlick all the while.

So time went on. Once a year, on his birthday, Pip went to see Miss Havisham, but he never saw Estella. And nothing else of particular importance occurred till he had been for four years Joe's apprentice.

One night, as Pip sat with Joe before the fire in the "Three Jolly Bargemen," they were called out by a gentleman whom Pip remembered to have seen once at Miss Havisham's. It was, as a matter of fact, Mr. Jaggers, her lawyer, who had sent Estella to her as a baby. He walked home with them, for he had a wonderful piece of news. It was that an unknown benefactor, whose name he was not permitted to tell, intended when he died to leave Pip a fortune. In the meantime he wished to have him educated to become a gentleman, and as a lad of Great Expectations, and, the better to do this, he wished Pip to go without delay to London.

This great good fortune seemed so marvelous that Pip could hardly believe it. He had never imagined Miss Havisham intended to befriend him, but now he guessed at once that she was his unknown patron. And he jumped next to another conclusion even more splendid—that she intended him sometime to marry Estella and was even then educating her for him. Pip went home almost in a dream, too full of his own prospects to see how sad Biddy was beneath her gladness for him, of how sorrowful the good news made Joe.

That night Estella's face came before him, fuller than ever of disdain. As he thought of her and of the fine gentleman he was to become the humble kitchen and forge seemed to grow commoner and meaner by contrast. He began to become a little spoiled and disdainful himself. The news soon spread about, and every one who had looked down upon him now gave him smiles and flattery. Uncle Pumblechook wept on his shoulder and (instead of telling him, as had been his custom, that he was sure to come to a bad end) reminded him that he, Pip, had always been his favorite. Mr. Jaggers had given him a generous amount of money to buy new clothes with, and these tended to make Pip more spoiled than ever. He began to feel condescending toward Biddy, and found himself wondering whether, when he should be rich and educated, Joe's manners would not make him blush if they should meet.

And even when the day came for him to bid them goodby and he climbed aboard the coach for London he thought more of these things and his own good luck than of the home he was parting from forever, or of the true and loving hearts he was leaving behind him.

This was an ignoble beginning for Pip and one that he came afterward to remember with shame!

3.—Pip Discovers His Benefactor.

MR. Jaggers, the lawyer, in whose care Pip found himself in London, was sharp and secret, and was so feared by criminals that they would never go near his house, though he never locked his door even at night.

He had a crusty clerk named Wemmick, as secret as he and a deal queerer. He lived in a little wooden cottage that he called the "Castle," with its top cut out like a fort. It had a ditch all around it with a plank draw-bridge. When he got home from the office in the evening he pulled up the draw-bridge and ran up a flag on a flag staff planted there; and exactly at nine every night he fired off a brass cannon that he kept in a lattice-work fortress beside it.

Wemmick was the first one Pip met in London, and the clerk took him to the rooms where Mr. Jaggers had arranged for Pip to live with the son of a gentleman who was to be his teacher. This gentleman was a Mr. Pocket, a relative (as Pip discovered) of Miss Havisham, which fact made all the more certain that she was his unknown friend. Mr. Pocket's son was named Herbert, and the minute he and Pip first saw each other they burst out laughing. For Herbert was none other than the pale young gentleman who, years before in Miss Havisham's garden, Pip had last seen looking up at him out of a very black eye.

They were excellent friends from that hour, and always remained so. They occupied the rooms together when they were in London, and Pip also had a room of his own at Mr. Pocket's house in the country. The latter was a helpless scholarly man who depended on Mrs. Pocket to manage everything, and she depended on the servants. There were seven little Pockets of various ages tumbling about the house, and Mrs. Pocket's only idea seemed to be to send them all to bed when any one of them was troublesome. At such times Mr. Pocket would groan, put his hands in his hair, lift himself some inches out of his chair and then let himself down again.

But, in spite of his oddities, Mr. Pocket was an excellent teacher, and Pip, in some regards, made progress. But his Great Expectations taught him bad habits. He found it so easy to spend money that he soon overstepped the allowance Mr. Jaggers had told him was his, and not only had got into debt himself but led Herbert, who was far poorer, into debt also.

Joe came to see him only once, and then Pip's spoiled eyes overlooked his true, rugged manliness and noted more clearly his awkward manners and halting speech. Joe was quick to see this difference in the Pip he had known and he did not stay long—only long enough to leave a message from Miss Havisham; that Estella had returned from abroad and would be glad to see him if he came.

Pip lost no time in making this visit, and started the very next day. The old house looked just the same, but a new servant opened the gate for him; it was Orlick, as low-browed, and sullen and surly as ever and Pip saw in his first glance that his old hatred was still smoldering.

Miss Havisham was in her room, dressed in the same worn wedding dress, and besides her, with diamonds on her neck and hair, sat Estella. Pip hardly knew the latter, she had grown so beautiful. But she was proud and willful as of old, and though he felt the old love growing stronger every moment, he felt no nearer to her than in those past wretched days of his boyhood. Before he left, Miss Havisham asked him eagerly if Estella were not more lovely, and as he sat by her alone drew his head close to her lips and whispered fiercely:

"Love her, love her, love her! If she favors you, love her! If she tears your heart to pieces, love her, love her, love her!"

Though this visit took him so near the old forge, Pip did not go to see Joe and Biddy. Indeed, only once in the months that followed did he see them, and that was when he went to attend the funeral of Mrs. Joe.

After that he had no need to leave London to see Estella, for Miss Havisham soon sent her to live in the city, from which place she required her to write letters weekly, telling her how many men she had fascinated and made wretched. Pip saw her constantly and tortured himself with the growing belief that Miss Havisham's training (the purpose of which he had begun to perceive) was really succeeding in crushing her heart, and was leaving her with no power to love any one.

Thus, between hope and despair, Pip became of age. Mr. Jaggers now informed him that a certain large sum was his to spend each year. He was deeply in debt and a great part of his first year's portion went to pay his creditors. But with the remainder he did a good and unselfish deed; he bought secretly a share in a good business for Herbert, so that his comrade became a partner.

A great blow was now to fall upon Pip without warning—something that changed the whole course of his life. One rainy night, when Herbert was away from London, as he sat alone in their rooms, a heavy step stumbled up the stair and a man entered. He was coarse and rough looking and tanned with exposure, with a furrowed bald head, tufted at the sides with gray hair. There was something strangely familiar to Pip in his face, but at first he did not recognize him. Seeing this, the stranger threw down his hat, twisted a handkerchief around his head, took a file from his pocket and walked across the room with a curious shivering gait that brought back to Pip's mind, like a lightning flash, the scene in the churchyard so many years ago, when he had sat perched on a tombstone looking in terror at that same man's face. And he knew all at once that the man was the escaped convict of that day.

It was a strange story the newcomer told then, a story that Pip's heart sank to hear. Miss Havisham had not been his benefactor after all. The one whose money had educated him, had set him there in London to live the life of a gentleman, the one to whom he was indebted for every penny he owned, was Abel Magwitch, a criminal—the convict for whom he had once stolen food years before!

Pip sank into a chair trembling as Magwitch, in a hoarse voice, told his story. He told how the man, Compeyson had led him into crime and then deserted him, and how he had hated him so fiercely that after they both had escaped from the prison hulks he had dragged him back to imprisonment even at the loss of his own liberty. How for that attempt to escape he had been sentenced to transportation for life, and had been sent to Botany Bay in Australia, where in time he became in a measure free, though forbidden under penalty of death to return to England. How he had never forgotten the little Pip who had tried to aid him, and how he had sworn that he would repay him many times over. How he had taken to sheep-raising and prospered, and became a rich man. How he had written to Mr. Jaggers, the lawyer, who had defended him, and commissioned him to find Pip and educate him. And how at last he had dared even the death penalty to come to England to see how he fared. His voice shook as he told how he had slaved through all the years looking forward only to this moment when he should come back to see the little Pip whom he had made into a gentleman.

Poor Pip! It was an end to all his dreams of Miss Havisham and of Estella. He shrank from Magwitch, horrified at the bare thought of what he owed to him. He forced himself to utter some trembling words and set food before him, watching him as he ate like a ravenous old dog, his heart like lead, all his plans knocked askew, pitying the pitiful affection of the man, but shrinking from him as if from a wild beast, with all his childish dread increased a hundred fold.

At length Pip put Magwitch to sleep in Herbert's room, but all that night he himself lay tossing and sleepless, staring into the darkness and listening to the rain outside.

4.—How Pip Came to Himself.

THE days that followed were one long agony to Pip. When Herbert returned he told him the whole story. Herbert was shocked and surprised, but he was true to his friendship and together they planned what to do.

It was clear to Pip that he could not spend any more of Magwitch's money; indeed recoiling from him as he did, he would have gladly repaid every penny if it had been possible. To make the matter worse, it seemed that Magwitch had brought a great deal of money with him and was determined that Pip should move into a fashionable house, buy fast horses, keep servants and live most expensively. Pip hesitated to tell Magwitch his decision, however, for all the convict now planned showed how much he had thought of him and loved him in his rough way during all the years he had toiled in Australia. Meanwhile he and Herbert kept Magwitch hidden as much as possible, and gave out that the old man was Pip's uncle, on a visit from the country.

Unluckily Magwitch's coming to London had been noticed. He had been seen in the street and followed to Pip's rooms. And the man who saw him was his bitterest enemy—Compeyson, the breaker of Miss Havisham's heart, who had first made Magwitch a criminal, and whom the convict so hated. Compeyson had served out his term, and was now free. He saw his chance to pay the old grudge with Magwitch's life. In order, however to make sure of his capture, he decided to entice Pip away and bring the police upon Magwitch when he would have no one to warn him.

Meanwhile, unconscious of this plot, Pip made a last visit to Miss Havisham. He felt now that he was again poor and without prospects, and with small hope of winning Estella. But finding her there, in Miss Havisham's presence, he told her how dearly he had always loved her since the first day they had met. She seemed moved by his distress, but her heart had not yet awakened. She told him that she was about to marry one whom he knew for a coarse, brutal man, in every way beneath her. And then Pip knew certainly that Miss Havisham's bitter teaching had borne its fruit at last, and that Estella was to marry this man as a final stab to all the other worthier ones who loved her more truly.

In spite of her years of self-torture and revengeful thoughts, Miss Havisham had still a spark of real pity. As Pip reminded her of the wreck she had made of him, through Estella, and through allowing him falsely to believe her his benefactor, his agony struck her with remorse. She put her hand to her heart as he ended, and as he left them he saw through his own tears her hand still pressed to her side and her faded face ghastly in the candlelight.

Sick with despair, Pip went back to London, to learn from Wemmick, Mr. Jagger's friendly clerk, that the rooms were watched, and that he and Herbert (who in the absence of Pip had confided in him) had removed Magwitch to another lodging—a room overlooking the river, which it would be easier, if worst came to worst, to get him on a ship and so out of the country.

To do this it was necessary to wait for a favorable chance. So Pip, providing for Magwitch's comfort meantime, bought a boat, and he and Herbert rowed daily up and down the river, so that when the time came to row the convict to some sea-going ship they would be accustomed to all the turns of the stream.

Pip soon learned that Compeyson was their spy. Wopsle, who in Pip's boyhood had been the clerk in the village church, had turned actor (he made, to be sure, a very poor one!), and was now playing in London. In the theatre one night he recognized in the audience the pale-faced convict whom he had once, with Joe, the blacksmith, and little Pip, seen dragged back to capture by his more powerful fellow. Pip had long ago learned from Magwitch that this man was Compeyson, and when Wopsle said he had seen him sitting directly back of Pip at the play, the latter realized that they had this bitter enemy to reckon with, and that Magwitch was in terrible danger.

Only once was this time of waiting interrupted, and that was by a letter from Miss Havisham begging Pip to come to see her. He went, and she told him she realized now too late how wicked her plans had been, and begged him with tears to try to forgive her. Pip, sore as his own heart was, forgave her freely, and glad he was ever afterward that he had done so.

For that same night, while he was standing near her, her yellowed wedding veil weeping too near the earth, caught fire and in an instant her whole dress burst into flame. Pip worked desperately to put out the fire, but she was so frightfully burned that it was plain she could not live long. His own hands and arms were painfully injured also, so that he returned to London with one arm, for the time being, almost useless.

Compeyson, meanwhile, made friends with Orlick, and between them they wrote Pip a letter, decoying him to a lonely hut in the marshes. When he came there Orlick threw a noose over his head, tied him to the wall and would have killed him with a great stone-hammer but for Herbert, who broke down the door and rushed in just in time to put Orlick to flight and to save Pip's life. Herbert had picked up the letter Pip had thrown down, read it, seen in it something suspicious, and had followed from London.

Pip saw now why he had been decoyed away, and knew there was no time to lose if he wanted to save Magwitch. They made haste to London, and when night fell took the convict in the rowboat and lay to a few miles down the river, waiting to board a steamer bound for Germany.

What happened next happened very speedily. They were about to board the steamer when a boat containing Compeyson and some police shot out from the bank, Compeyson calling on Magwitch to surrender. The two boats clashed together and the steamer, unable to stop, ran them both down. At the same moment Magwitch seized Compeyson and they went into the water together.

When Pip came to himself the steamer had gone, his own boat had sunk and he and Herbert had been dragged aboard the other. A few moments later Magwitch was picked up, badly injured in the chest, and was handcuffed. But they never found Compeyson—the other had killed him in that fearful struggle under water.

That night Magwitch was lodged in jail and before many days he was tried for returning to England and was sentenced to be hanged. But it was clear before this that his injury would never let him live to suffer this penalty.

And now, as he saw the convict lying day by day drawing nearer to death, calling him "dear boy" and watching for his face, all the loathing and repugnance Pip had felt for him, vanished away. He sat beside the sick man at his trial; now he sat beside his cot each day in his cell, holding his hand. He knew now there could be no possibility of his taking the fortune the convict would leave, for, being condemned to death, all his property went to the Crown. But he did not tell Magwitch, whose last hours were not embittered by this knowledge.

One thing he discovered, however, which he told the dying man. This concerned Estella. As the film of death came over the convict's face Pip said: "Dear Magwitch, you had a child once, whom you loved and lost. She is living still. She is a lady and very beautiful. And I love her!" And with this last glad news, Magwitch died.

Before this Herbert had left England for Cairo, whither his business took him. Left alone, after the strain, Pip fell sick of a fever and in the midst of this found himself arrested for debt. That was the last he knew for many weeks. When he came to himself he found Joe, the true-hearted blacksmith, nursing him. He had paid Pip's debts. Miss Havisham was dead and Orlick was serving a jail sentence for robbing Uncle Pumblechook's house.

Joe's faithfulness smote Pip with a sense of his own ingratitude. After a visit to the old forge with Joe and Biddy, now Joe's wife, Pip felt how true were the old friends, and buried forever the past false pride and folly and knew himself for all his trials a nobler man.

He sailed to Cairo, where he became a clerk in Herbert's business house, and finally a partner, and it was eleven years before he was in England again.

Then, one day he went down to the old ruined house where Miss Havisham had lived. He entered the weed-grown garden, and there on a bench, a sad, beautiful widow, sat Estella. Her husband had treated her brutally till he died, and she had learned through suffering to know that she had a heart and had thrown away the one thing that could have made her happy—Pip's love.

When Pip and she left the old house that day it was hand in hand, never to part again.